

**ADDRESS**

16.

**OF THE**

**SOUTHERN RIGHTS**

**ASSOCIATION**

**OF**

**YAZOO COUNTY.**

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5/19/50

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OF THE SOUTHERN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION OF  
YAZOO COUNTY.

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*Resolved*, By R. STEPHENS: That the Hon. E. C. Wilkinson, D. Walker, Colonel W. E. Pugh, Maj. F. W. Quackenboss and S. S. Wright Esqs., be requested to prepare an address, by our next meeting, with a view of having it printed and circulated.

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*Fellow Citizens:*

In compliance with the above resolution, we proceed briefly to address you. A sense of duty and self respect require that we vindicate our party from aspersions that should not in justice attach to it. Nothing is more common than misrepresentations of the principles and purposes of a political party; but within the brief period since ours has been formed, it has suffered more than is usual, of abuse and detraction; and with an industry worthy of a better cause, and a zeal that belongs as much to the propagandist of error as of truth, our views, objects, aims, and principles have been disfigured and falsified, and the party has been made to wear a garb and even a name as foreign from its wishes as from plain truth and common justice. We are called alarmists, sewers of discontent and strife, and plotters of disunion. But without the name, we are in fact the real Union party: for we seek to restore the government to its former integrity and order. We strive to insure that the original purposes of the government shall be faithfully carried out, and that security shall be furnished us that the majority, which all admit to have the *will*, shall not in future have the power to oppress us. This we seek to do by amendments to the Constitution, to be proposed to the North by a solemn and full Convention of the South and thus to bind the States more strongly together, by added ties and new obligations. Does this look like a purpose of disunion? We say nothing of the past, we shut our eyes to the *present*, rather than give up the Union, but we can never *forget* the past nor what is now passing, and we, therefore, to prevent disunion, ask additional guarantees to *bind* not to *loose* the South from her allegiance to the Government.

But what say the party in our midst which is opposed to us, and which assumes the name of "Union?" They will go out of the Union "if the fugitive slave law is repealed." This is the platform of the Convention lately held in Georgia; and it is declared in substance and effect to be the platform in Mississippi. The language of Georgia is: "In the event of a repeal or of a material modification of the law," she "will and ought to resist even to a disruption of every tie which binds her to the Union." The language of the "Union

party" in Mississippi is, "that a refusal of the government to enforce its provisions, would justify a resort to measures of resistance." See the proceedings of the Union mass meeting, held at Jackson 18th Nov. 1850.

Now we plainly but respectfully propound these queries to the Union party in Mississippi:

1st. Would not a repeal of the fugitive slave law be clearly and undoubtedly constitutional?

2d. Would not any measure of resistance a State could take against an constitutional act of Congress a nount of itself to an act of secession from the Union? Or bring on unavoidably a direct collision between such State and the General Government, and so end in disunion?

We conclude therefore that the platform of Mississippi and Georgia are in effect identical.

Refusing to unite with the State Rights party in a call for the Southern Convention or Congress to save the Union by reforming the Constitution, they allow themselves no alternative but to *break up* the Union if the fugitive slave law is repealed.

This then, People of Yazoo, will be the issue in the election (now soon to be held) of delegates to the Mississippi Convention—shall the South demand a Congress or not? This is the issue, and we intend it shall not be changed or evaded. Shall the South have a Congress with demands for suitable additional guarantees for Southern Rights and a reformation of the Constitution, and additional strength and durability to the Union? or shall she fold her arms and wait for a repeal of the fugitive slave law (which is certain soon to take place,) and then abruptly go out of the Union? It is for you to decide this question. Some there are who ask what additional guarantees we would have? Is not the Constitution perfect? they ask. No. A clause denying to Congress the power to legislate about slavery at all (except with the consent of all the States,) would make it more perfect—another clause obliging Congress to admit any State formally and regularly applying for admission into the Union, whether its laws recognize slavery or not, would make it more perfect still. Other examples equally striking and necessary for the protection of the South, might be adduced, if our limits permitted.

Now, fellow citizens, who are the destroyers and who the conservatives? And which party has borrowed a name for effect, to bend and sway the public mind, which they no more deserve than the buccaneers of old deserve the name of "friends of the sea," which they assumed in part to disguise their real objects from themselves, and in part to mislead such as might otherwise suspect them? And why destroy the Union for the repeal of the fugitive slave law? Does the law save to Mississippi a single slave? Or would its repeal lose for Mississippi a slave? No. You acquiesce, gentlemen, in the loss of an empire, of territory large enough for fifteen States; you see the North shut up the future millions of your slave population, within barriers so strong that in future nothing but disunion can everbreak them for you, and you raise no hand against the unjust law. You must see that the effect of this law will be such as in sixty years to compel the Southern master to run away from his slave, and to leave the land to the quiet possession of the myriads of blacks who, by the laws of increase, will then be upon it, and that the North will thus consummate a policy already avowed, of making slavery abolish itself, and yet you refuse to join us in our efforts to prevent the catastrophe through means of a Southern Congress; and you call us alarmists, disunionists, fire-cutters, and some of you call us traitors; but repeal the fugitive slave law and you will go out of the Union! Why this inconsistency of conduct? Allow us (with no motive of offence whatever) to tell you why it is. The State Rights doctrine is the democratic doctrine. It was the doctrine of Jefferson, it was the doctrine of Madison, it was also the doctrine of Jackson and Polk; and the State Rights party is, and always has been, the democratic party. And the present attitude of State Rights principles, is but a development of the old Jeffersonian time honored democratic principle, and nothing else. Hence it is that the State Rights party now embraces every sound

democrat in the State. It also numbers many whigs, who attracted by the clearness and force of the recent development of principle, come out from the fogs and mists of party into the clear broad light of a *Union*. But you, gentlemen, Union men as you call yourselves, refused last June to occupy the platform of the "R. S. P." as indicated by the Nashville Convention, because you supposed it might indirectly involve in difficulty the administration of Gen. Taylor. You admitted that the admission of California was a flagrant and enormous wrong, but the administration had been privy and even party to this wrong, and you determined to submit to it. You were invited and even stimulated to do it, by the Northern editors who had possessed themselves of nearly every whig press in the South, and by some of the Northern men of the democratic party, who, true to their early associations, and the claims of kindred and country at home, severed themselves from their party allegiance and joined their old enemies, and you acknowledged the force of the appeal, and obeyed the summons. This accounts for the division that exists among *us*, fellow citizens. But there is another and still wider division in the slaveholding States. It is this. In the grain-growing slaveholding States, all or nearly all are opposed to the platform of the State Rights party. The reason of this is a seeming enigma, but a little reflection will make it apparent enough. It is not their interest to be otherwise, and unlike their sires of the revolution, they are not disposed to "go into revolution upon an abstraction." The increase of their slaves is not barred all egress from their country, as ours is, by a wall which can never be surmounted. They have an outlet for it amongst us, the people of the cotton growing States; and in getting rid of their surplus of slaves which would otherwise soon be troublesome neighbors, they add greatly to the wealth of their country by the prices they receive in return for them. Room and scope to extend slavery is to the grain growing States no vital matter. They precipitate their surplus slaves upon us, and we unmindful of our own true and real interest are always eager to get them. But repeal the fugitive slave law and the grain-growing slaveholding States lose property to the value of \$200,000 a year. It is no wonder then that they should threaten a dissolution of the Union if this law is repealed, while they counsel submission to what has been done; but it is a little strange to us that Southern slaveholders should be so easily caught and carried away by this false and interested cry.

Now, fellow citizens, if Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee, were unwilling to unite with us and stop the North from admitting California (as they surely could have done,) is it reasonable for those States to expect the South to bind herself to their car to be dragged by them out of the Union in the event of the repeal of the fugitive slave law? Their frontier, their large seaport towns and intimate commerce with the North, render them easy prey to the abolitionists; our slaves are safe from disturbance, and those States serve as break-waters against the restless and ever beating tide of Northern fanaticism. The repeal of this law would be nothing in the list of wrongs, indignities, and spoliation, which the South has already suffered, but far worse than this may be done by an uncurbed and dominant majority a deed that would justly bring about an immediate dissolution of the Union; and it is to prevent this that we demand, for our safety, a Southern Congress.

Allow us to direct your attention, gentlemen of the Union party, to the inconveniences and hazards of the position you have chosen. You distinctly announce yourselves as opposed to a convention (see 6th resolution of the Union meeting at Jackson,) but you will resist if a certain law of Congress is repealed. This is sufficiently explicit as a declaration, doubtless, but what sort of reasoning is contemplated by you? Have you very clear ideas upon this head yourselves? Do you mean individual resistance, or the resistance of the State of which you are citizens? or the combined resistance of all the Southern States? If you mean individual resistance to a valid act of Congress, that is flat rebellion, gentlemen, and we cannot go with you. If you mean resistance on the part of Mississippi only, this we grant you would be within the pale of your political power; it would be legal, in short, but we think it would

look a little silly, and few, very few of us would join you in such a step as this. Do you mean then to resist by the combined and united action of the Southern States? But how are the States to combine without concert?—How can there be concert without conference? And how are the States to confer without first convening? Well then; this act of convening is the very convention or Congress, that we of the State Rights party wish to bring about, and which you, by your Jackson resolutions, oppose. If you sit with folded arms until this law is repealed, how long would it require to enable you to bring about this necessary concert among the States of the South, which we seek to effect in advance? You would have first to agree upon a plan of organization, then you would have to organize under this plan, then to deliberate upon a plan of resistance; at the end of which time, the reasons for resistance at all, may not appear absolutely imperative to all of you. Time often diminishes the sense of injury, and sometimes blunts the sting of insult. It has happened already, more than once since the beginning of this contest; not with you gentlemen, but it has happened with the great States of Virginia and Georgia. Who can find language strong enough to stamp, as it deserves, the recent conduct of Georgia? The words which the great master of language puts into the mouth of a father deploring the lost honor of his polluted and ruined child, is scarcely more than fitting the case and condition of Georgia.

"Oh! she is fallen

Into a pit of ink that the wide sea  
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again;  
And salt too little which may season give  
To her foul tainted name."

No, do not let us fall like Georgia into a state of listlessness and fancied security. Let us organize and prepare for resistance, if it shall be necessary, and if it never shall be necessary, what injury results? The rattlesnake, the monarch of reptiles, basks not languidly, and at full length until the foe's foot is lifted over him, for he knows that when his adversary plants his iron heel upon his head, all is ended. He may writhe and struggle then, with contortions as terrible as the folds of the Lernaean Hydra in the grasp of Hercules, and it will be with no more avail. But he scents with unerring instinct the danger afar off, and he lifts his crest, and poises himself in attitude to strike when violence is offered, and he springs his terrible rattle, which says to all who hear it, "touch me not!"—"I reserve the venom of my fang for the man who treads upon me."

Here we are admonished to pause. Gentlemen of Yazoo; there is much in a name. Our opponents understand this perfectly, and have for this reason, assumed the name of the "Union party," when their course, if persisted in, must, in our opinion, lead, by sure and certain steps to a dissolution of the Union. Now we desire above all things to preserve and uphold the Union, provided our rights can be secured to us under it. But we must add that if we are to be treated as dependants and inferiors in the Union we shall not only be willing but anxious to go out of it. In other words, we prefer equality out of the Union, to inequality in it, and if we must submit to dependance and vassalage as conditions of remaining in it, we would seek independence and freedom, even if we had to go out of the Union to find them. There may be some who are frightened into submission to unjust and tyrannical laws, and who are afraid even to assert the right of State Secession from a dread of the consequences of it. Should the South be forced to such a sad alternative, she would be shorn, it is true, in part of her National glory, but in all that constitutes real prosperity and permanent security and peace, the South might be even gainer by the change. It would promote our security. Should we now, as members of the family or States, succeed by conquest or negotiation in acquiring any or all of Mexico, of any of the States of Central America, or of the Islands of the Caribbean, every foot of it would be dedicated immediately to freesoil. No candid and observant man will gainsay this. Out of the Union, territory acquired by the South would be instantly open to the reception of the slaveholder and his property, and the

South drained in part of a slave population, which would otherwise soon grow redundant and dangerous, would be established in peaceful and permanent security from troubles from this source, for all time to come. She would be rendered more secure for another reason. Every Northern man has now a right by the constitution of the Union, to come among us—no one has a right to question him as to his motives or purposes. What security have you that there may not be in future disguised and secret abolition emissaries among them? Many of our fellow-citizens from the North we know to be worthy and excellent men, ornaments of society in the country of their adoption, but is it any stretch of credulity to believe, or any want of charity to say that there may be exceptions? Even they will admit as much. Do you remember the story of the Roman Scaevola and his bands Fanaticism will encounter dangers as great, and submit to torture as terrible as he, in order to effect its purpose, and when detected and exposed, will glory in the attempt as much, and with a heroism worthy the most exalted patriotism.

It should be remembered that the Northerners who are now amongst us—industrious, orderly, and useful, as they unquestionably are—left their homes when this cloud of abolition was but small, and when this sort of fanaticism was sectional and not general as it has since become; but now that the cloud covers and darkens the whole country, can you expect those who may hereafter come fresh from this hurricane, hot with lightning, to be free from the spirit of the storm they have helped to fan and kindle? If the Southern States constituted an independent nation, no alien could cross our frontier without a passport in his pocket. There would be a high wall and a deep ditch between the two people; no incendiary could come amongst us; and abolition documents, even if our slaves could read them, our post masters would be forbidden to receive. The South would be perfectly secure, therefore, from agitation. But she would be prosperous. The mechanical trades would then flourish here. Mechanical labor here freed from the crushing competition of the North, and fostered as it would be by judicious imposts, would thrive and flourish; workmen would flock here. Hatters, Tanners, Masons, Coopers, artisans of all kinds would fill your towns, doubling their population and the prices of property in them. The thunder and lightning of your steam Manufactories would echo from every hill and gleam in every valley. The White population would rapidly gain upon the black, instead of the reverse, which otherwise will soon be the case. The trades cannot live here now under the blighting influence of Northern competition; but planters overseers, and a few professional men, make up the sum of your population. Of all men the mechanic should least dread a separation of the South from the Union. But our limits will not allow us to pursue this subject further. Our instructions go no further than to vindicate our party from the charge of being factionists and disunionists. No way fearing the consequences of secession, we yet desire to see the Union perpetual. In order to make it so, we shall strive to reform the Government, and to elect men to the Convention who are pledged to aid us.

You now have our views, fellow-citizens, our purpose, and our object—will you co-operate with us? We cordially invite you so to do; and warn you not to be lulled into security by the cry of our adversaries that we have “peace! peace! when there is no peace,” but to remember that the price of liberty is, and ever has been, “Eternal vigilance.”

E. C. WILKINSON, Ch'mn.

W. E. PUGH,  
S. S. WRIGHT,

D. WALKER.  
F. W. QUACKENBOSS.  
*Committee.*